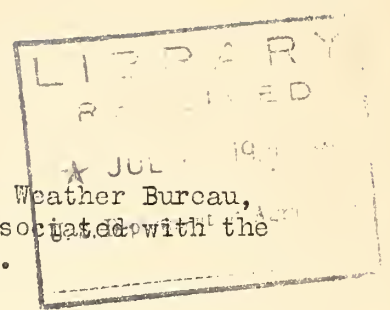


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DON'T DEFEY LIGHTNING



A radio talk by Roy M. Covert, meteorologist, Weather Bureau, delivered through WRC and 34 other radio stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company, Monday, June 23, 1930.

FRIENDS OF THE RADIO AUDIENCE!

I know that many of you are interested in the subject I shall comment on today, for at the Weather Bureau we get many, many letters asking about protection from lightning. I have written a farmers' bulletin, as Mr. Salisbury told you, on the subject of protecting buildings from lightning, and I also have answered many letters. Later on I shall answer some of the questions most often put to us.

Let me say at the outset that you don't need to emulate Ajax of old mythology and defy lightning. It is perfectly practicable to protect your buildings from lightning, and the persons of your family when housed in a rodded structure are safest from lightning. Your livestock can also be protected. Use lightning rods. In middle western States, more than half of the farm buildings are rodded, according to estimates of fire marshals and other officials.

The other half of farm buildings not now rodded, is the group bearing nearly all of the heavy losses from lightning fires. In passing, I might say that those good at estimating tell us that about 75 per cent of the total lightning-fire loss occurs in rural districts. That 75 per cent looks larger when we learn from the statistics of the National Board of Fire Underwriters that the total lightning-fire losses in the United States annually are nearly 20 millions of dollars, not a small sum. You see, lightning ranks high as a fire producer; in fact, it still stands first so far as farm fires are concerned, even though rodding of buildings is quite general. Much of this direct loss and of the contingent loss resulting from losing use of buildings, or losing their contents can be avoided. Farmers -- and insurance companies -- certainly would like to be less familiar with lightning fires.

I shall now take some of the typical questions coming to us about protection for lightning, and see if my answers to them will not reply to some of the questions that you would like to ask.

The first one is "Over what part of the United States is protection from lightning advisable?"

In general, I should say, where thunderstorms are frequent. And that is usually east of the 100th meridian, which passes through central Kansas. Protection is also required occasionally in certain mountainous regions to the west where thunderstorms are numerous. I want to add that in planning for protection, you should consider not only the frequency and severity of thunderstorms, but also the value and nature of the building and contents; local conditions; insurance premiums; personal hazards; and indirect losses.

Here's a second question we get: "Are insurance rates lower for protected buildings?"

My answer is -- they should be, and quite often they are. Many mutual companies offer lower rates to owners of rodged buildings; some will not insure a building that isn't rodged! In my opinion, a well-rodged building should be classified along with structures carrying other fire-protective devices and should be dealt with by the insurance companies accordingly.

What unrodged structures in rural sections are most likely to be damaged by lightning? is a third question.

And the answer is farm houses and barns; churches, especially those with tall spires; grain elevators and granaries; hay, grain, and straw stacks.

Time for just one more answer to a typical lightning question, and I'm selecting this one: "How can I prevent my livestock from being killed or injured by lightning?"

Well, if you've observed very many lightning accidents to livestock, you have probably noticed that they usually occur when the animals are up against or very close to an ungrounded wire fence. The lightning often strikes a considerable distance from the animals and travels along the fence. To prevent such accidents, properly ground all wire fences. Another precaution that may pay is to rod isolated trees or small groups of trees under which stock congregate during thunderstorms. Or, if a grove of trees is available to the stock, cut down the isolated trees, or prevent the animals from seeking shelter under them.

Now I sincerely hope these brief remarks may be helpful to you. If you want further details, write to the Department for Farmers' Bulletin 1512-F, "Protection of Buildings and Farm Property From Lightning."

Good bye, and thank you.

